Berwick-upon-Tweed was described by Pevsner as “the most exciting little town in England.”   The only part of England north of the River Tweed, 4 square miles,  our Guildhall 2 miles south of the Scottish border.   Good Friday 1296 Edward I took the land, built stone walls so he could cross the border at low tide.  Only Jerusalem besieged more times than Berwick, changing hands between England and Scotland thirteen times, under English control since 1492, for the moment and not to be confused with Scottish North Berwick.

Elizabethan I transformed the walls in the 16thC, the best preserved in Europe and upon which she spent twice as much as she spent on the whole of defence, for the whole of her reign to stop The Scots and French Allies attacking from the north, Berwick never successfully attacked.

The Victorians built Berwick railway station over Edward I 13thC castle, then the largest in Britain.   Its stones removed in the 17thC  to build Berwick Parish Church in a unique style under Cromwell, who passed through Berwick to siege Dunbar and Edinburgh.  Built by the men who became The Coldstream Guards, whose Colours hang inside.  The original preface to The Book of Common Prayer states:  “this book shall be used by all that officiate in all cathedral and collegiate churches and chapels and in all chapels of colleges and halls in both the universities and the colleges of Eaton and Winchester and in all parish churches and chapels within the kingdom of England, Dominion of Wales and town of Berwick-upon-Tweed.”

Berwick has three iconic bridges, each with royal connections.  The 1621 Berwick Old Bridge, ordered by James Ist of England as he passed into England at The Union of The Crowns.   The 1928 Royal Tweed road Bridge, opened by the Prince of Wales, Kind Edward VIIIth until his Abdication.   Robert Stephenson’s Royal Border Rail Bridge opened by Queen Victoria in 1850.

Berwick was described as ‘a second Alexandria’ in medieval times, so great was its port trade in salmon, grain, linen, eggs, a major stopping port for the herring fleet and base for arctic whalers with its own shipyard.   The herring fleet is no more but Berwick has adapted to change, tourism vital.   Grain merchants supply the whisky industry, timber, oil seed rape and fertiliser come in and out of port on coasters.

We look forward to welcoming you to our town, to our museum, art galleries, Main Guard, military exhibition in our 18thC Barracks, the Guildhall, guided tours of the Elizabethan walls and bastions, the bridges, quayside, shops, restaurants and Parish Church.

Berwick’s Shrievalty in its present form only dates back to 1836 but its roots lie almost a thousand years ago in the ancient Shrievalty of Berwick, when it encompassed Berwickshire, now in Scotland.  The first Sheriff of Berwick was Norman in 1147.   It was an hereditary post, amongst my predecessors  John de Soulis in 1288 who was also Vicar of Berwick and the Earls of Bothwell.

**Canon** **Alan Hughes MBE TD VR  Sheriff of Berwick 2021-22, Chaplain to The High Sheriff of Northumberland and former Vicar of Berwick** …email skypilot60@btinternet.com